

Members

Sen. Murray Clark, Chairperson
Sen. Robert Meeks
Sen. Ron Alting
Sen. Billie Breaux
Sen. Connie Sipes
Sen. Frank Mrvan
Rep. Gregory Porter
Rep. Richard Bodiker
Rep. Clyde Kersey
Rep. Robert Behning
Rep. Robert Hoffman
Rep. Phyllis Pond



INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ISSUES

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Authority: Legislative Council Resolution 99-1
(Adopted May 26, 1999)

MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: August 26, 1999
Meeting Time: 1:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St., Room 156B
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Sen. Murray Clark, Chairperson; Sen. Robert Meeks; Sen. Billie Breaux; Sen. Connie Sipes; Sen. Frank Mrvan; Rep. Gregory Porter; Rep. Clyde Kersey; Rep. Robert Behning; Rep. Robert Hoffman; Rep. Phyllis Pond.

Members Absent: Sen. Ron Alting; Rep. Richard Bodiker.

The chairperson called the meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. After introducing the members who were present, the chairperson explained that the Committee had been created by the Legislative Council to study issues related to violence in schools and the teaching of reading. He then called upon Rep. Susan Crosby and Sen. Steve Johnson, each of whom had authored a resolution during the 1999 session concerning violence in schools, to give a brief overview to the Committee.

Rep. Crosby stressed that while the majority of students in any school are on the right path, some are disaffected. It was to identify and assist these students that she and Sen.

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

Johnson put together Preliminary Draft (PD) 4804-1999 (Exhibit 1), concerning the screening of potentially violent students. This PD was finished too late to receive a committee hearing during the last session.

Sen. Johnson pointed out that student safety is the most pressing issue facing schools today, and is an issue that concerns students, faculty, parents, and the community. As such, it is an important public policy issue. He suggested that the Committee could perhaps use PD 4804 as a starting point for legislation. Sen. Johnson then asked Attorney General Jeff Modisett to present information to the Committee.

Mr. Modisett reiterated that school safety is a pressing issue. He presented a brief overview of Project Peace, which is a peer mediation/conflict resolution program jointly sponsored by the Indiana State Bar Association, the Indiana Department of Education (DOE), and the Attorney General's office. He explained that while statistics show there is less total violence in schools, the violence is no longer focused in urban schools and is more random; thus, there is greater general concern about the issue. Mr. Modisett currently serves on a national school safety task force with other attorneys general from other states, where he has learned that Indiana was the first state to require school and school corporation crisis management plans to be in place. He also mentioned the school safety specialist legislation that passed last session as a positive step. Mr. Modisett distributed a manual called *Protecting Hoosier Children* (Exhibit 2) that his office has prepared for schools to use in deciding when student searches are appropriate.

Mr. Modisett would recommend that the General Assembly consider amending the current student discipline statutes to require a school to notify law enforcement if a student brings a firearm to school. A bill that would have required such notification and a psychological evaluation of the student failed on third reading in the House last session. He also advocates more open disclosure of violations committed by students to the community. When asked whether prosecutors are filing charges after being notified of expulsions because of firearms, Mr. Modisett replied that while he does not currently have data concerning the issue, he will obtain it for the Committee. Committee discussion followed.

Steve Davis, director of student services for DOE, spoke briefly to explain the roles of counselors and school psychologists in working with students.

Terry Spradlin, legislative liaison for DOE, stated that school safety is a top priority for Dr. Reed and DOE, and introduced Cathy Danyluk, DOE's school safety specialist, to provide more detailed information (see Exhibit 3 for a copy of Ms. Danyluk's presentation). Ms. Danyluk pointed out that while schools remain statistically the safest place in a community, steps must be taken to ensure their continued safety. She sees a balance of prevention, intervention, security, and crisis management as being crucial. DOE has been working with the Indiana State Police to train school staff in best practices for security. Ms. Danyluk outlined the keys to school security as being the following:

Policy: each school must have a policy concerning incident and crime reporting, discipline, and emergency preparedness and crisis intervention.

Staffing: schools must be aware of potential security issues when hiring and staffing positions, both paid and volunteer, and should train staff consistently. In addition, school corporations must make a decision whether to use on-staff security personnel or local law enforcement.

Students: schools must be aware of a variety of factors concerning students, including relationships and trust between students and faculty; gangs,

cliques, and other associations; family and custody issues; and warning signs of trouble.

Legal: schools should consider security measures as being risk prevention measures as well as measures to limit liability. Inaction or ignorance concerning security may bring legal problems for a school.

Facilities: schools must consider physical design issues and access control, in addition to communications and signage issues.

Ms. Danyluk stated that there is a need to instill an attitude that everyone has a role in keeping schools safe, and to make training a top priority. Emergency plans should be tested. Ms. Danyluk would recommend incorporating school security into teacher preparation programs. She pointed out that DOE has best practice models of emergency preparedness plans for schools on its website.

Clarissa Snap, coordinator of the school safety specialist training academy that was created by a statute enacted in the 1999 legislative session, stated that the academy is in the process of putting together its curriculum, and anticipates that training will begin in December and continue in the spring.

The chairperson distributed copies of select school safety enactments from other states that he had received from NCSL (Exhibit 4). Committee discussion followed.

The chairperson called upon Sen. Breaux and Sen. Sipes to introduce the topic of the teaching of reading. Sen. Breaux explained that the resolution requesting a study of the issue was an outgrowth of the chairperson's phonics bill (SB 457-1999), which the chairperson had dropped after it was voted out of committee. She stated that she felt it was necessary to examine what is being taught in elementary schools and in higher education. Sen. Sipes pointed to the proficiency standards established by the Indiana Professional Standards Board (IPSB) as a way of making sure all teachers and everyone else know what is required of them before they are licensed.

The chairperson explained that he had introduced SB 457-1999 because it seemed that young teachers didn't seem to know how to teach reading, especially how to teach phonemic and sound recognition. He dropped the bill and filed a resolution because he felt a broad discussion of the teaching of reading was necessary.

Rep. Pond requested DOE to send questionnaires to each school corporation addressing two issues: (1) How is reading taught in the corporation? (2) What is the school corporation's kindergarten age waiver policy? The chairperson also requested DOE to provide data concerning beginning readers, and stated that he would not wish to mandate teaching only phonics, but rather wishes to ensure that teachers can use a variety of methods to teach reading.

Tom Hansen, IPSB director of legal and external affairs, presented information to the Committee concerning teacher education and licensing (Exhibit 5). He stated that under the licensing system to which the IPSB is moving, the guiding principles will be a focus on what an educator knows and is able to do, using teacher standards that are based on student standards, and increasing accountability. He stated that the new licensing standards are in effect now for teacher preparation programs, since current undergraduates will be required to pass the new license tests. To ensure that teacher preparation programs are preparing students to meet the new standards, the IPSB will monitor the performance of students from each undergraduate program on the licensing tests. If a program does not prepare

students to meet the standards, that program will lose its accreditation and students attending it will be unable to receive federal financial aid. The IPSB feels this will be a powerful motivational tool for teacher preparation programs.

In response to Committee questions, Mr. Hansen stated that the IPSB receives approximately 1,100 requests each year (out of approximately 50,000 licensed teachers) for limited licenses that will allow teachers to teach out of their field. Most of these requests are to teach in special education. He also said that while there are teacher shortages in some areas, in others there is a surplus.

Gail Pluta, Indiana Federation of Teachers, stated that her organization favors a balanced approach to instruction and teacher preparation.

Sharon Barnett, a member of the Washington Township School Board, pointed out that her school corporation had to provide in-service training for teachers in how to provide phonics instruction, as teachers who have graduated within the last fifteen years do not have the skills to teach phonics.

Larry Smith, chairperson of the elementary education department at Ball State University, stated that their program teaches a variety of methodologies for students to use. He also discussed the most important factors for children learning to read and said that the teacher is generally more important than the method.

Amy Cook Lurvey, COVOH, pointed out that it is important for a teacher to have an entire package of skills with which to instruct students.

Don Horrion, dean of the Indiana University School of Education, offered to report on IU's teacher preparation program at a future meeting.

Chuck Little, Urban Schools Association, stated that northern Indiana media has been carrying "teacher raiding" ads from Detroit, where there is a shortage of teachers.

Gail Zeheralis, Indiana State Teacher's Association, stated that for both school safety and the teaching of reading, professional development for teachers is a necessity. She asked whether the state could provide assistance and money for this professional development.

The chairperson stated that he anticipated there will be three more meetings of the Committee. The first, on September 15 at 1:00 P.M. in Room 125 of the State House, will focus on the teaching of reading. The second and third meetings will be at 1:00 P.M. on October 7 and October 28.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 P.M.